

Planning



The New Challenge

Ofsted now recognises the need for schools to:

- provide their own compelling data of a trajectory of improvement
- successfully promote and support children's 'self confidence, self awareness and understanding how to be a successful learner'.

This together with the current interest in character led education all point to the opportunity for schools to cultivate the habits and attitudes that underpin success and thereby build students' learning characters.

About Learning Habits and Character

Learning habits are the routine ways in which we think and act when faced with life's experiences and challenges. They are second nature to us. Some habits make us very productive and effective; others cause us to learn in constrained and limited ways. Habits are indeed part of our character.

We acquire habits through use: ways of behaving become habituated. If we have a well formed **Planning** habit, we will have a tendency to use it in all learning experiences. The more we experience the value of a particular habit, the more we will tend to use it throughout our lives.

Like it or not, teachers do help to form a learning character. The ways in which young people perform and behave are influenced by the way teachers orchestrate and guide learning. Deliberately fostering an effective learning character in students is a renewed common purpose for education, shared between students and teachers, parents and society more generally.

A well formed **Planning** habit involves being **ready, willing, and able to:**

Have a sense of the longer term — considering options and possible consequences before taking action.

Know that it pays to start with the end in mind; identify end goals or objectives before considering possible action.

Make use of a wide variety of skills and tools to gather ideas and information, or sequence activity in order to decide what needs to be done.

Consider timescales and possible obstacles in drawing up a realistic plan.

Think laterally as well as logically so that the task in hand benefits equally from creative and rational thought.

Be open-minded and flexible about how things might happen so that opportunities can be seized and fresh directions taken.

Stop and take stock of progress in the light of experience, adapt the planned course of action or even abandon it if it turns out to be inappropriate.

Evaluate the process and outcomes of an endeavour in order to learn from the experience and adapt behaviour in the future.

“**Stop setting goals. Goals are pure fantasy unless you have a plan to achieve them.**”
– Stephen Covey

Young people with the habit are likely to:

Keep the end in mind

Use time efficiently

Ask questions and anticipate obstacles

Consider the value of possible outcomes

Prioritise their actions

Rise to the challenge when things change

Persevere when things get tough

Keep an open mind

Scan for possibilities

Re-form, re-shape and re-order

Take time to get things right

Quick Wins

Thinking routines to build into lessons

'What do we know?'

What do we need to know?'

- » Expose students to intriguing aural, visual, or, written material.
- » Invite them to distil what they know on Post-it notes – gallery these on the learning wall.
- » In pairs, ask students to respond to 'What questions are you asking yourselves about this?' – build spider diagrams.
- » Take a plenary around 'What do we know... what do we need to know?'
- » Set students the task of discovering for themselves.

'What will it look like when it's finished?'

- » Set a task — physical, dramatic, written, practical, spoken, visual — that has clear parameters but which is open-ended.
- » Make WWILLWIF the regular precursor to any action.
- » Ask students to determine WWILLWIF for themselves in conjunction with others.
- » Help them to visualise this in an appropriate form.

'I used to think... Now I think ...'

- » Present some information in a variety of forms – ask students to respond to 'What are you noticing?'
- » Glean opinions from others in an open and inclusive way.
- » Invite students to adapt their views in the light of others' views.
- » Get students to distil their change of mind through 'I used to think... Now I think ...'

Forming the habit

Planning

activities to further

Knowing what to do when you don't know what to do

- This works well for pairs or small groups; it can also be used with individuals.
- Introduce to students: 'We often find ourselves in situations where we have only partial information but still need to adopt a plan based on what we know.'
- Say that you are going to give them 25 frames from (e.g.) a Tintin strip cartoon, starting mid-way through the story. They will get the frames in batches of five, picked at random from the 25, AND five random frames have been removed, so they will only get 80% of the story.
- The task: Make sense of the narrative; work out what happened before, what happens next.
- But first: 'How will you set about working with this information?' Ask them to devise a plan.
- Release the first five frames.
- After four minutes, nudge them to ask themselves: What do we know? What questions are we asking ourselves? What do we need to do next?
- Release the next five frames and so on, repeating the questions at each stage
- Plenary discussion to review what they've discovered about planning for uncertainty.

Senior citizens' Xmas party

- Set students the challenge of organising a Christmas Party for the elderly – what are the features that they will need to take into consideration?
- Suggest they divide the tasks into critical areas – Timing... Invitations... Refreshments... Entertainment... Publicity... Health and Safety... Transport... — do not provide the scaffolding
- Distil the results as a timeline with allocated responsibilities.

Structuring an extended project

- Give students a pack of cards that describe the 10 or so sections in an extended project based on the Driving Question: Where's the safest place to live? Ask them to sequence the material to make clearest sense. Ask them to give each section a generic heading.
- Challenge students to prepare the outline structure for a response to other Driving Questions, for example, 'Is Planet Earth injury prone?' 'Where did the dinosaurs go?' 'Why don't people stay at home?' 'Should we choose to end a human life?' 'Is the idea of God more trouble than it's worth?'
- Agree with the class the generic headings for an extended piece of work – display it as an aide-memoire in the future.

Emotional Climate to build a forward thinking learning character

Starting with the end in mind

- » Lessons start with routines for students revisiting prior experience to identify future and immediate needs.

Speculation for accumulation

- » Regular opportunities to consider 'What should we do... What could we do... What might we do?'

Post-it and scrap it

- » Post-it notes and wall plans support working flexibly and creatively. Move them around, throw them away, start again, tick things off, highlight the 'Must do' and the 'Don't forget'.

When the chips are down

- » Tasks with tight deadlines show students what they can achieve when they have to act quickly and decisively.

Two minds are better than one

- » Students think things through together in pairs before beginning a piece of work.

Teachers as character builders

Learning habits form part of our character and develop through use and practice (deliberate or otherwise!). But desirable habits will survive and flourish better if students are aware of them, realise their value and strive to improve them.

Cultivating habits involves:

- Providing rich and varied **occasions** for **exercising** learning habits
- **Infusing** learning habits into lessons to enhance content understanding
- Recognising and **celebrating** the use and **growth** of learning habits
- **Enabling** students to identify how and when to use learning habits
- Expecting students to take ownership of and **responsibility** for their learning habits
- **Exploring** the development of learning habits with students.

Teachers are influential character builders and need to be mindful of how they help students form, replace, re-form and strengthen their learning habits.

Are your teaching habits helping students' learning habits? Are you building learning characters who will succeed in life?

Take it steady! Think about how and when you might:

Stop/avoid:

- Saying 'In the exam...'
- Over-preparing material
- Making it too easy for students
- Being the centre of attention
- Providing closed templates and prescribed routes that over-scaffold learning
- Limiting the opportunities for collaborative work.

Experiment with:

- Changing direction in lessons
- Letting students agree their longer-term learning objectives
- Setting team challenges.

Start/do more of:

- Letting students work it out
- Providing students with the tools to generate their own plans
- Exploring students' thought processes
- Making the most of peer assessment
- Asking students to set their own targets.

Start slowly:

- Planning lessons with students
- Showing your own Work in Progress
- Providing contrary data
- Leaving things incomplete
- Allowing longer for drafting or trialling
- Modelling and commenting on the ways in which people plan, prepare, adapt and change.

Turn the heat up or down

- » Tone and atmosphere change to meet different needs: the Learning Kitchen one day, the Learning Library another.

When things look like falling apart ...

- » Model confidence, flexibility and a 'can do' approach in the face of mistakes or unexpected events.

Being stuck is the starting-point for learning

- » 'Stuck challenges' stimulate students to expand their capacity to know 'What to do when you don't know what to do.'

Talk to nudge Planning

Teacher talking as a learning coach

(To ensure students do the thinking for themselves.)

What are you aiming to achieve?

What will your end product look like?

How will you judge the success of what you have done?

Decide who's going to do what and when.

Get things in the right order – what is urgent and what is important?

Look at what you have done so far – do you need to make any changes?

Are you on track to meet your deadline?

Student self-talk

(As the skill becomes a habit, and as the habit shapes part of the learning character, look out for students who say (or think) the following)

What am I really trying to do here?

What am I trying to achieve?

How long will this take?

How long have I got?

What might get in the way?

How can I allow for that, or avoid it?

What do I know and what do I need to find out?

What resources will I need?

Where can I get them?

What planning tools will be useful to me at this point?

How can I make best use of other people?

At what stages will I take stock and decide if I need to change?

